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A PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGY FOR ACTIONS AGAINST LIBYA

An effective public affairs strategy for gaining support for whatever measures we decide to take against Qadhafi would have to (1) dramatize the message of the danger we feel Libya poses to U.S. interests and to international order; (2) anticipate fears and opposition likely to be engendered by the specific policy actions chosen to deal with Qadhafi; (3) counter these concerns with arguments designed to alleviate undue anxiety and appeal to overriding motives of morality and patriotism; and (4) expend the necessary resources and utilize sufficiently varied channels to get the message across to broad and opinion-shaping sectors of the public.

Danger Posed by Qadhafi.

We would want to get the following message across:

-- Qadhafi's ideological predisposition is antithetical to U.S. and western interests and to the norms of international order subscribed to by most civilized nations.

(1) Qadhafi considers assassination and terrorism to be legitimate vehicles for accomplishing his policy objectives.

- He has supported regimes as reprehensible as that of Idi Amin.

- He operates a network of terrorist training camps in Libya; people trained in these camps are then fanned out within Africa, throughout Europe, and as far away globally as the Philippines. (Declassify this information, as necessary.)

- Groups supported include the Red Brigades (who took credit for the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro in Italy).

- Qadhafi planned to assassinate U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Eilts in 1977 and was deterred from doing so only by strong action on our part. Within the last three months, Qadhafi has publicly threatened the life

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of President Reagan and has sent assassination teams to target several U.S. Ambassadors in Western Europe. (If proved): Even more recently, Qadhafi's agents were responsible for attempting to assassinate our Charge in Paris, Christian Chapman.

(2) Qadhafi's incursion into Chad, ostensibly to support the legitimate government there in the midst of an ongoing civil war, was followed by demands that Chad merge with Libya. When these demands were rejected and Qadhafi was asked to leave in favor of an OAU-sponsored peacekeeping force, Qadhafi cynically manipulated the situation by withdrawing precipitously, taking food and supplies with him, and depositing new armaments with pro-Libyan guerrilla forces so that they could carry on their campaign against the central government on Libya's behalf. Libya is reported to hope either that the resulting chaos in Chad will result in an invitation to the Libyans to return or that the ascendancy of pro-Libyan forces who will view the merger plan with greater favor than their predecessors will be achieved on the battlefield. (Declassify this information, as necessary.)

(3) Qadhafi's opposition to Israel and the Camp David process is well-known. In efforts to undermine constructive approaches to Middle East peace, Qadhafi has supported the most radical of the Palestine liberation groups -- those openly subscribing to the the use of terrorism to achieve their goals.

(4) Partly as a result of his regional ambitions to head a pan-Saharan Islamic State and partly in opposition to the U.S. and Camp David, Qadhafi has supported dissident groups in pro-Western Tunisia, Morocco, Somalia, the Sudan, and Egypt -- along with a score of smaller African countries.

- Qadhafi's gloating in the wake of the assassination of Anwar Sadat and his exhortations aimed at achieving the overthrow of the successor regime in Egypt were particularly obnoxious -- and give a measure of the man he is.

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(5) Within Libya, itself, Qadhafi is punishing opponents to his regime with arrest and torture, while subscribing to an anarchistic philosophy that alleges that there is no government. Instead, there are "People's Committees" that undertake actions in the name of the people in a manner that leaves the individual citizen of Libya no redress against their excesses.

- Libyans who oppose the regime are not safe even when living in exile abroad. Qadhafi has called for their liquidation as enemies of the Libyan revolution.

- Qadhafi's long reach in this regard has extended to western European countries and even to the United States, as illustrated by the widely publicized shooting incident involving a Libyan dissent graduate student living in Colorado.

-- Qadhafi and the power that he could command by virtue of Libya's small population of 2.5 million would pose a relatively small threat were it not for Libya's huge oil income. Under normal oil market conditions, this income amounts to \$25 billion a year. Before the discovery of oil, Libya was one of the world's poorest countries.

-- Libya has used its oil income not to help in the economic development of other poor countries, but to purchase a vast arsenal of advanced Soviet weaponry, far in excess of its own legitimate defense needs.

- Libya has already purchased over \$12 billion worth of Soviet weapons, paying the Soviets, in turn, much-needed hard cash.

- These weapons, in addition to Libyan campaigns of subversion directed against its neighbors, pose a substantial regional threat in North Africa and in the Horn of Africa -- areas crucial to the protection of the Mediterranean and the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

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- We cannot be certain of Soviet motives in providing a client as reckless as Qadhafi with such advanced arms, but cannot discount the possibility that the Soviets have pre-positioned advanced weaponry in Libya to serve their own military purposes some time in the future.

-- Libya has widely proclaimed its intention to produce an Islamic nuclear bomb. In spite of our efforts to curtail the dissemination of nuclear technology and weapons-usable materials, Libya's oil income makes it almost impossible to prevent black market acquisition of proscribed items.

U.S. Response to this Danger.

We have already taken several steps designed to demonstrate that we will not conduct business as usual with a regime led by a person we consider to be an international outlaw. The most dramatic of these steps were the closing of the Libyan People's Bureau in the U.S. in May 1981 and the U.S. naval exercise in international waters illegally claimed by Libya in August 1981. In addition, we have taken a variety of steps designed to curtail Libya's ability to support international subversion and to reduce Libya's conventional military capabilities.

If we decide to move further and undertake economic actions like (1) a unilateral embargo of U.S. imports of oil from Libya; (2) a blanket prohibition against U.S. commercial relations with Libya; or (3) the mandatory withdrawal of U.S. citizens now residing in Libya, we can expect the following concerns to be expressed by the U.S. public:

--First, fear that the U.S. will pay for these actions at the marketplace. In particular, there is likely to be an expectation that denial of Libyan oil -- whether by our own action or by Libyan reprisal -- will cause U.S. domestic consumers hardship. Memories of the Long gas lines of 1973 are still sharp, as is concern about the high cost of home heating fuel and its impact on the poor and elderly.

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-- Second, antagonism generated by the assumption that others will profit commercially at U.S. expense. This will be especially acute if wide publicity is given to the likely continuation of lucrative business relationships between Libya and our western allies.

In order to counteract these concerns, we would want to stress the moral issue: service of the national interest rather than private gain. Our policies would be making it clear that we were not going to be doing "business as usual" with an international outlaw. No longer would U.S. dollars be used to fund international terrorism and purchase advanced Soviet weapons.

We would also want to undertake a campaign to explain those aspects of the oil market that are especially relevant here:

-- In the current period of glut, the U.S. is only importing 3 percent of its imported oil supplies from Libya.

-- Oil of equal quality and lower prices is available from Nigeria.

-- Even if the current glut should disappear, the U.S. would be able to replace Libyan oil with that of other suppliers.

-- Our recent policies to move forward on conservation measures, the filling of our Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and the encouragement of exploration for new sources of oil through de-control of oil prices, are all measures that help provide us with a safety net in the event that supplies are discontinued from a single source.

-- Even though we have deplored the use of oil as a weapon, there is no guarantee that oil producing nations will not again seek to embargo oil to the West. By our actions we will have indicated that consuming nations have a card to play, too, and that we will no longer follow passive and reactive policies that leave the initiative with the Libyas of this world.

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If we decide to undertake military steps beyond enhanced regional security assistance, we will encounter fear of escalation that could lead to:

-- direct involvement of U.S. forces in combat in an area far from home; and

-- ultimate U.S.-Soviet military confrontation on behalf of the respective client-states involved.

Again, in order to counteract these concerns we would want to focus attention on particular messages:

-- the deterrent effect of the military measures we are undertaking.

-- our resolve not to introduce U.S. combat forces into the area; and

-- the necessity to take forceful, timely action in order to prevent harder choices from confronting us further down the road.

Channels for an Information Campaign

These would be varied. In addition to backgrounders to the press, we would want to ask key administration officials -- from the Departments of State, Energy, Commerce, and Defense -- to brief opinion-shaping groups privately and to give public addresses in the forums that would gain the greatest publicity: the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, the World Affairs Council, the Foreign Policy Association, and other similar groups -- with special emphasis on regional dispersal.

We would also want to mount a speaking campaign, coordinated by State, to reach public affairs groups at the community level. The scope of this effort and the resources we would devote to it would depend, in part, on the measures chosen to deal with Libya. Similarly dependent on the kind of measures chosen would be the kind of audience targeted at the community level. If low-level military measures are selected to supplement economic measures, for example, we would want to address groups that are eager to support a more forceful U.S. stance in the world, as well as their opposite number: groups that are fearful of the escalating consequences and ultimate social costs of such action.

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If only economic measures are chosen, we would want to place our emphasis on business and consumer groups.

Timing

The sequencing of the components of a public affairs campaign, and the amount of lead-time needed for each one would also be dependent in part on the measures chosen and the need for secrecy prior to their effective enactment. We could certainly begin with a campaign to outline the general threat Qadhafi presents, as indicated in the first section of this paper. Following this, we would want to tailor the subsequent stages of the information campaign to the requirements set by the measures chosen and others that we see downstream.

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